

*Entgegnung zu Ronald Smelers Besprechung von Sophie A. Welisch: Die Sudetendeutsche Frage 1918–1928, in BohZ 25/2 (1984) 427.*

I have belatedly become aware that a review of my book, *Die sudetendeutsche Frage 1918–1928*, appeared in *Bohemia*, vol. 25, 1984, p. 427. In that the reviewer, Ronald Smelser, presents what in my opinion is a gross distortion of content, process and interpretation.

A major criticism of the review is that Dr. Smelser does not show the fallacy of my three basic themes but dismisses them collectively as “discredited”, “flawed”, ““bürgerlich”” or “rehashed”. Claiming it “a questionable, and unquestioned, assertion” that the Chzechs failed to consolidate the Republic and win the loyalty of the minorities, he notes that „from 1926 to the outbreak of the Great Depression a tentative political rapprochement developed between the two peoples within the framework of the republic.“ Moreover, he contends that by limiting my study to 1918–1928 I am conveniently able to ignore a presumed national reconciliation resulting from Sudeten German activism between 1926–1938.

What Smelser overlooks is that the seeds of the Sudeten German-Czech dispute were firmly rooted in the constitutional framework of the state, and that no degree of

activism, collaboration or cooperation on the part of the Germans ever led to its modification. To condemn activism as a "*quantité négligeable*" is as valid if applied to 1938 as to 1928.

A second objection to Smelser's review is that he characterizes my sources as "convenient" to my purpose. What he fails to mention is that they are primarily documentary, semi-documentary and memoir materials of the principal participants. Amply cited and in context to explain the Czech position are monographs, diaries and biographies of Thomas Masaryk, Eduard Beneš, Emanuel Rádl, Kamil Krofta, Alois Rašín, Josef Chmelař, Josef Pekař and others. The Stenographic Protocols of the Czechoslovak National Assembly, which the reviewer found listed in the bibliography but reference to which he could not locate in the text appear as footnote 38 of chapter 2 on page 43. Moreover, while he claims I have not used "neutrally generated statistics", he nonetheless fails to indicate which statistics he has in mind.

*Die sudetendeutsche Frage 1918–1928* rests heavily on archival materials from the National Archives in Washington, D. C., including microfilmed records of the German Foreign Office, the Papers of the American Commission to Negotiate the Peace 1918–1919, and the Decimal files (1920–1928) of the United States Department of State, as well as from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library of the United Nations in New York. I allow the documents to speak for themselves. If their text leads Smelser to conclude that the Czechs were „the villains and the Sudeten Germans the innocent victims”, then so be it.

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